

Courier

Extra pages
and photos

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Online,
use the hand
symbol above
to transfer
directly to the
stories.

Hurricane responders recall experiences

Fairfax County responded quickly to the impact of Hurricane Katrina.

Several teams of county employees helped with the recovery efforts on the Gulf Coast, including the Fire & Rescue Department's highly skilled and specially equipped search-and-

rescue team, Virginia Task Force One. Here are some personal observations from

county employees who went to the area. Although the printed *Courier* has limited space, you can read their full accounts and see more pictures in the online issue found at <http://infoweb/courier>.

See Observations, page 2



Some of the NoVa volunteers at a landmark.

GIS puts you on the map

"The power of place" is how **Tom Conry** describes the county's powerful Geographic Information System applications. And Conry should know, for he is the Department of Information Technology's director of GIS/Mapping Services which provides the tools to help agencies develop visual presentations of their information. "It's so much easier to understand information when it can be displayed visually in a relationship or in a placement with other information," said Conry.

See GIS Day, page 3

Adoption awareness

This month Fairfax County joins with local, state and national organizations around the country to proclaim November as Adoption Awareness Month, a time to acknowledge adoptive parents and recognize the acute need for adoptive families for many of the children who are in foster care.

Roosevelt is counting on us. Placed in foster care at birth, Roosevelt spent his first two years of life in various foster care placements. He was again placed in foster care at age 10. Since that time, he

See Adoption, page 4

Read the full stories and see more pictures online at <http://infoweb/courier>.

Observations, from page 1

Rob Stalzer, deputy county executive

Stalzer led 18 members of the Northern Virginia Emergency Response Team 5 to New Orleans to work in the Emergency Operations Center. "This was one of the most professionally gratifying things I've been a part of – especially seeing 18 individuals quickly come together as a cohesive team focused on the same objectives and having genuine team chemistry," he said. One of the last official acts of the team was leaving a comprehensive resource notebook with recommendations and observations of its 15-day deployment. "Ultimately," he said, "it will be up to the city leaders to make [things] happen. Time will tell – but things need to happen quickly."

Lt. Raul Castillo, Fire & Rescue

"What impressed me about the employees from the City of New Orleans was that, despite their losses of homes, families and friends, many continued to carry on and perform their duties in a professional manner," he said.

Suzanne Devlin, deputy police chief

Devlin served on a liaison team working with the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security, noting the challenges she found in working across organizational cultures. "I saw incredible efforts by hundreds of volunteers and employees, working to fill an incomprehensible need for food, water and shelter, all in the wake of yet the next threat – Rita," she said. Devlin helped a ship owner deliver housing kits to New Orleans and reported on the challenges in ordering and getting delivered 250 vehicles for

the New Orleans Police Department.

Jeff Smithberger, Division of Solid Waste, DPWES

Smithberger said his deployment was unlike anything he has ever experienced, from seeing the incredible devastation to working with unbelievable people. He recounts the experiences of a forklift operator working for him who, with his wife and four children, had lost everything. He took many photographs of the area. Smithberger still checks daily reports from the area and said, "While the work was intense and long each day, I'm ready to go back if ever needed."

John Fout, Internal Audit

"The devastation was far more than I could have envisioned," he said. He emphasized the importance of having emergency plans, "not just for public safety, but also for the general business operations of local government." Normal tasks such as procurement were difficult as the city's business process and systems were down.

Roy Shrout, Office of Emergency Management

Shrout reaffirmed what many have said that "the magnitude of destruction is total in some sections. What you saw on television or heard on the news pales in comparison to the stories we heard." He recounts a story of how a police officer trapped in his home with rapidly rising water was instructed to use his police revolver to break out to his roof and to safety.

Dana Paige, Family Services

Paige commented on the effectiveness of people coming together as a team to begin solving some of the incredible problems in the area. "As I worked along side health and human services officials from New Orleans and Northern Virginia, there was a strong sense of commitment to making the city safe and supportive for residents as they return to rebuild their community," he said, further describing how important he felt the Northern Virginia support was to the city.

Read the complete stories and see more pictures of the area on the Infoweb at <http://infoweb/courier>. ■

Members of the Northern Virginia response teams assemble for a photo.



GIS Day, from page 1

County employees and guests will be able to see some good examples of GIS applications on Wednesday, Nov. 16, when the county celebrates GIS Day. From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the first floor of the Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, 16 agency exhibits and demonstrations will show how GIS applications improve their work. Included in the list of exhibitors are representatives from Fire & Rescue, Health Department, Police, Planning and Zoning, Wastewater Management and Park Authority as well as other county agencies. GIS Excellence Awards, presented by Braddock District Supervisor **Sharon Bulova** and Department of Information Technology Director **Wanda Gibson**, will recognize employees and agencies that have "demonstrated exceptional use of GIS applications."

Conry explained some effective ways GIS is being used with the county to improve work efficiencies. "For many years, Fire & Rescue has used GIS to pinpoint emergency locations, show the nearest fire stations and map the shortest travel routes. DPWES uses GIS with its database to map the county's sanitary network," he said, pointing out that 70 to 80 percent of county data relates to some place. "Visualization through maps and aerial imagery saves a lot of field time."

Conry also said GIS can be a virtual time machine, displaying change over time. For example, the county has different years of aerial photography, starting from 1937. GIS has taken samples from three key areas of the county: Tysons Corner, Kamp Washington and Chantilly to show the changes. These

are available in time-lapsed photography on the GIS/Mapping Web page on the county Web site at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/maps/timemachine.htm.

The importance of GIS/Mapping can be appreciated in the context of the recent Gulf Coast destruction. When landmarks, street signs and roadways were obliterated, GIS provided geographic coordinates that enabled emergency requests to be identified to location.

What is the future of GIS in Fairfax County? Conry sees continued growth in this resource as agencies find more ways of integrating and displaying data. Many users will not even know they are using GIS, rather it will be working behind the scene

to get users the information they need. One of the newest applications that will be demonstrated at GIS Day is called "My Neighborhood," where someone can see what is near his or her selected address. For example, a home address will show the distance to schools, roadways, fire and police stations, and shopping areas. This tool will be available on the county Web site at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/maps/map.htm.

GIS isn't magic, but rather an "enabler." County agencies that do not use GIS applications can talk with the GIS/Mapping staff and other agency GIS users to explore ways of better displaying their data. Training classes are available to teach employees how to use this valuable tool.

For an excellent source of information on GIS/Mapping applications, visit the Web page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/maps/map.htm or call 703-324-2712, TTY 711. Best yet, see first hand at GIS Day, Nov. 16 how this powerful tool is changing the way we work. ■



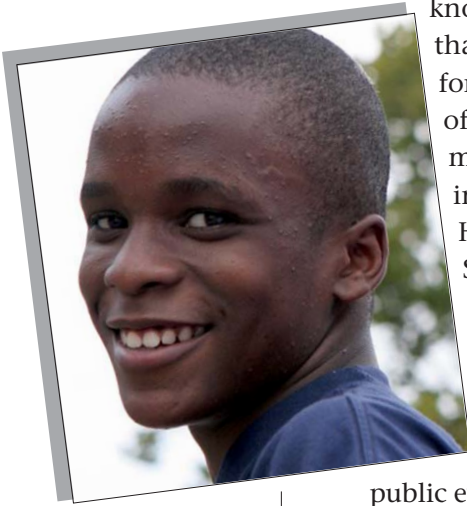
**GIS information
is online at
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/
maps/map.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/maps/map.htm)**

GIS Day and GIS Excellence Awards are Nov. 16

Adoption, from page 1

has been hoping to be adopted.

Now, at age 13, Roosevelt and several other Fairfax County children in our custody who need adoptive families are letting the public



Roosevelt
(photo by Joan Brady)

know who they are, in the hopes that a loving family will step forward to adopt them. Photos of Roosevelt are featured this month in two events in Washington, D.C. — the National Heart Gallery Exhibit at Union Station and the Voice for Adoption Portrait Project at the Dirksen Senate Office Building. Roosevelt and others also have appeared in local newspaper articles and at public events throughout the area.

This public approach is part of the county's Kidsave Fairfax Weekend Miracles initiative, launched by the Department of Family Services and the nonprofit organization, Kidsave. The goal is to engage an entire community in the search for families for children who need them. There are many ways to help. Host a child for weekend visits to introduce him or her to your community of friends and extended family. Become a child's mentor or advocate. Spread the word

that we have children in our community who need families.

These children are depending on us — they trust that we, as a community, will not let them down.

The clock is ticking for these kids. Every year, about 20 young people leave the county's foster care system with no permanent family to support them. The older the children get, the less likely it is that they will be adopted.

Roosevelt is warm and friendly, with a good sense of humor and an easy smile. He likes school, video and card games, biking, basketball and eating Chinese food. With his Kidsave Fairfax mentor, Roosevelt recently learned to bowl, make his own pizza, and play the harmonica.

Please help us help Roosevelt and the other children who have placed their trust in us. With your help, we can find them the loving, permanent families they long to have and desperately need.

To learn more about adopting a child through the county's foster care and adoption program, call 703-324-7639, TTY 703-222-9452, or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs.

To learn more about Kidsave Fairfax Weekend Miracles, call 703-683-KIDS (703-683-5437); TTY 711, or go to www.kidsave.org. ■

FCCCC goes to the South County Center with nonprofit exhibits



South County Center employees talked with nonprofit representatives.

There was an enthusiastic turnout at the South County Center on Friday, Oct. 28, when the Fairfax County Combined Charitable Campaign and representatives of area nonprofit organizations explained how vital our contributions are to local organizations. The FCCCC is the major source of funds for many area organizations that provide services to the needy.

Merni Fitzgerald, director of the Office of Public Affairs and chairperson of this year's campaign, said, "County employees have always been generous in times of need. With the nation having just experienced two devastating hurricanes, the importance of our charitable support cannot be emphasized too much." In the past, county employees have contributed more than \$200,000 to the FCCCC.

See your agency's key person and make your contribution before Nov. 18. Your dollars can make a difference in someone's life. ■

Benefits open enrollment ends Nov. 14

Only a few days remain for county employees to enroll in or make changes to their benefits for 2006. Employees can make changes online at www.fairfaxcountybenefits.benelogic.com no later than midnight on Nov. 14. Any benefit enrollments and/or changes submitted after this date will not be accepted.

Here are some frequently asked questions that can help with your enrollment decisions.

General

Q: If I don't do anything, will I still have the same benefits for 2006?

A: If you do nothing, you will have the same health, dental, group term life and long term disability coverage that is currently in effect. If you wish to participate in the medical spending and dependent care accounts for 2006, you must enroll each year. Participants in the new flexible spending accounts should be aware that the county has a new administrator, Fringe Benefits Management Company (FBMC), and you must complete a new direct deposit form (available on the Benelogic Web site under 2006 Forms) and send it to FBMC to continue having reimbursements deposited directly into your bank account.

Q: How do I access the Benelogic Web site?

A. First, go to the Benelogic enrollment site at www.fairfaxcountybenefits.benelogic.com. Enter your user name (your User ID – typically your first initial and the first 5 letters of your last name) and password (the last four digits of your Social Security number). If you don't know your User ID, you can ask your payroll contact for this information. If you have problems signing into the Web site, contact HR Central at 703-324-3311, TTY 711.

Q: How can I verify that my benefits enrollment and changes were accepted?

A: After you have finished entering all of your benefit enrollment changes, you must click on the "Finish" button in the lower right corner of the last page of the enrollment screens. After you do this, you should print a confirmation statement by clicking on "Print Preview" in the lower right corner of your screen and then clicking on "Print This Page" in the upper right corner of the screen.

Life Insurance, Long-Term Disability and Long-Term Care

Q: How do I increase my life insurance?

A: To request additional coverage, complete the Minnesota Life enrollment application form available on the Benelogic Web site and submit it to Employee Benefits, DHR by Nov. 14. DHR will notify Minnesota Life of the request and Minnesota Life will send you an evidence of insurability (EOI) form to complete and return directly to them for review and approval. Minnesota Life will inform you if your request has been approved or denied. All changes become effective on or after Jan. 1, 2006.

Q: Must I enroll in long-term care and/or long-term disability during open enrollment?

A: You can apply for this coverage at anytime, but you will need plan approval if you are requesting this coverage after your initial 60-day eligibility window. You must submit an enrollment form and an evidence of insurability form, and be approved by the plan provider. Forms are available on the Benelogic Web site. You can request long-term disability and long-term care enrollment kits from Benefits/DHR. Long-term care enrollment kits are also available from Aetna at 1-800-537-8521. ■

Focus on Benefits



**HR Central
703-324-3311,
TTY 711**

Holiday Food Drive: Nov. 21 - Dec. 8

The Department of Human Resources will again sponsor the county's annual Holiday Food Drive. The drive will begin on Nov. 21 and continue through the morning of Dec. 8. All contributions will be donated to a nonprofit organization that collects and distributes food to Northern Virginia families in need. In addition to nonperishable food items, donations may also include household cleaning supplies and personal hygiene items (toothpaste, soap, shampoo and toilet paper). Collection boxes will be located in the Government Center cafeteria and HR Central (suite 270). If questions, please contact **Traci Vaughan** in DHR at 703-324-3317, TTY 711. ■

The marathon is patterned after the original run by the Greek slave Pheidippides from the city of Marathon to Athens in 490 B.C.

A great run!

A marathon is 26.2 miles, but it seems a lot longer when you are running it. Here are the names of county employees who completed the 30th Marine Corps Marathon on Oct. 30. Congratulations!

Sam Bachman, CSB; **Joseph Battista**, DFS; **Tony Biller**, FRD; **Clay Fortney**, DTA; **Craig Herwig**, DPWES; **Aaron Hopkins**, OFC; **Kimani Long**, FRD; **Jeff McCaslin**, CSB; **Michael McDaniel**, PD; **David Miller**, PD; **Joaquin Perez-Arrieta**, DFS; **Leonard Reynolds**, PD; **Ricky Savage**, PD; **Kimberly A. Schoppa**, FRD; **Steve Smylie**, PD; **Amy Steacy**, Circuit Court; **Joann Studer**, PD; **John Vickery**, PD; **Kevin Webb**, PD; and **Phyllis Wilson**, DPWES. ■

Rabies clinic

There will be a rabies clinic for dogs and cats on Nov. 13, from noon until 2 p.m., at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, 4500 West Ox Road, Fairfax. The cost is \$10 for vaccinations. Dogs should be on a leash and cats should be in carriers. There are no vaccinations for ferrets. The clinic is sponsored by the Fairfax County Police Department's Animal Services Division and the Deepwood Veterinarian Hospital.

At the same time, owners can purchase 2006 dog licenses. The cost is \$5 for altered animals; \$10 for unaltered animals.

Animal control officers will be on hand to enforce the leash and license laws.

If questions, please call the Animal Shelter at 703-830-1100, TTY 711. ■

Diversity Conference on Nov. 16 offers free talent show

Wednesday, Nov. 16, will be enlightening and entertaining for county employees. That's when the second annual Diversity Conference occurs, from 9:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. **Michael Wilbon**, award-winning reporter and columnist for The Washington Post and co-host of ESPN's popular "Pardon the Interruption," will be the keynote speaker at the opening session, from 10 until 11:30 a.m. in the Government Center board auditorium, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax.

The noon program in the Government Center Forum will highlight the talents of county staff members who were selected for the talent show. Performing will be **Margie Benitez**, **Pawan Kishor**, **Tammy Smith**

Gloria Stone of DTA; **Michael Thomas Cash** of HRC; **Javier Iturralde** of DPSM; **Maureen H. McCracken** of CSB/MHS (in a duet with **Hiroshi Uyama**); **Maria Padmore** of HD (dancing the salsa with her spouse, **Antonio Padmore**); **Harry Rado** of DPZ; and **Vance Turner** of DHCD. Lt. **Francis Mensah** of FRD will serve as MC. **Michael Neuhard**, chief, Fire & Rescue, will give the opening remarks while **Martha Villanigro-Santiago**, deputy director of OEP, will close the program.

A panel discussion in the board auditorium, 1:30 to 3 p.m., will explore the immediate and possible long-term results of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. Panelists will include first responders, law enforcement, human services, risk management and possibly evacuees from the Gulf Coast area.

If you have not registered for the event, then come at noon and enjoy the talents of county employees.

If questions, please contact the Office of Equity Programs at 703-324-2207, TTY 703-222-5494. ■



Briefs

Strategic Planning for Local Governments

Gerald L. Gordon, Ph.D., president and CEO of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, recently released the second edition of his book "Strategic Planning for Local Government."

He wrote the first edition of the book in 1993. For this new book, he revisited the strategic plans of several communities included in the 1993 volume to see how they were implemented and to see what lessons could be learned from their experiences.

"Strategic Planning for Local Government," published by The International City/County Management Association (ICMA), offers step-by-step guidance on preparing a local strategic plan to help local government leaders anticipate and shape the future of their communities.

P2P Conference

Mark your calendar for Thursday, Dec. 8, for the fourth annual Procurement to Payment (P2P) Conference. An exciting agenda has been planned with a theme of "Change & Innovation." Join the Departments of Finance and Purchasing & Supply Management for vendor exhibits, door prizes, refreshments and opportunities to learn how to enhance your purchasing to payment knowledge. All staff involved in procurement or payment processes are encouraged to attend. Registration information will be in NewsLink the week of Nov. 14. Please contact **George Hohmann** in the Department of Finance at 703-324-3085, TTY 711, with any questions.

Volunteer Tutors Needed

Volunteers are needed for day and evening hours to work one-on-one with adult learners in public libraries

Briefs

or adult learning centers. Additional opportunities are available working with adolescents in alternative school settings. The Volunteer Learning Program (VLP) trains tutors, assesses learners and provides materials with follow-up support. A training session is scheduled for November. VLP is a joint community project of the Fairfax County Public Schools (Adult & Community Education), Juvenile Court and the Public Library. VLP has been serving the community for 30 years. For more information about volunteer opportunities this fall, please call 703-246-2139, TTY 711, or e-mail VLP@fcps.edu.

Gifts From The HeArt

Local artists are invited to enter their works in the Jo Ann Rose Gallery's Seventh Annual Gifts From the HeArt exhibition. The show enables artists to give back to the community by donating a

Briefs

portion of the money they receive from the sale of their art to Reston Interfaith. The show will run from Dec. 5, 2005 – Jan. 3, 2006, with an opening reception on Dec. 11, from 2 until 4 p.m. This reception is free and open to the public.

For an entry form or further information, please contact **Cheri Danaher** at the Reston Community Center, 703-390-6175, TTY 711.

Jazz for Justice

Enjoy some of the best jazz in the area on Friday, Nov. 18, at George Mason University's Center for the Arts Concert Hall. Jazz for Justice, sponsored by the GMU Music Department and the Fairfax Law Foundation, will present a dynamite concert with proceeds going to the foundation's educational and charitable programs. Tickets are only \$15 for nonreserve seats. Order tickets through Top Centre Tickets, 703-251-2335, TTY 711, www.topcentre.com. ■

County Holiday Schedule

Here's the county holiday schedule for the rest of the year and 2006. You always can see all holidays and which government level celebrates them on the Infoweb.

2005

Nov. 24, 25	Thursday, Friday	Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 23	Friday	Half-day for Christmas Eve
Dec. 26	Monday	Christmas Day

2006

Jan. 2	Monday	New Year's Day
Jan. 16	Monday	ML King Day
Feb. 20	Monday	Washington's Day
May 29	Monday	Memorial Day
July 4	Tuesday	Independence Day
Sept. 4	Monday	Labor Day
Oct. 9	Monday	Columbus Day
Nov. 10	Friday	Veteran's Day
Nov. 23, 24	Thursday, Friday	Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 22	Friday	Half-day for Christmas Eve
Dec. 25	Monday	Christmas Day

Security & Safety Matters

Holiday safety at home

Fall and the winter holidays are a time for celebration with family and friends. Here are some tips to stay safe during this holiday season:

Fire Safety

- ♦ Ensure a working smoke detector is present on every level of the house and especially in or near sleeping areas. Test smoke alarms monthly and replace batteries at least twice a year. Replace smoke detectors according to manufacturer's recommendations.
- ♦ Establish a fire escape plan and a designated meeting place for the occupants of your home.
- ♦ Burning candles should be located out of the reach of children, never left unattended and away from all combustible materials.

Kitchen Safety

- ♦ When cooking be careful not to

wear clothing with loose sleeves or dangling jewelry. The clothing can catch fire and jewelry can catch on pot handles resulting in spills and burns.

- ♦ Cook on the back burners. Turn pot handles inward so they do not extend over the edge of the stove.
- ♦ Never leave food cooking unattended.
- ♦ Keep the kitchen off-limits to young children unless properly supervised by an adult.
- ♦ If a fire does occur, put a lid on it! (Call 911 if it gets out of hand!) Pan fires are best extinguished by covering the pan with a lid or a cookie sheet to smother the flames. Never use water.
- ♦ Have a fire extinguisher available not more than 10 feet from the stove, on the exit side of the room. A 2.5 lb. class ABC multi-purpose dry

chemical extinguisher is recommended. Know how to properly operate your fire extinguisher.

Home Safety

- ♦ Have a qualified contractor inspect the furnace or ventilation equipment to ensure proper operation.
- ♦ Install a carbon monoxide detector on all occupied floors if you have fuel-burning appliances.
- ♦ The National Fire Protection Association recommends space heaters be at least 36 inches from walls, bedding or anything flammable. Operate in accordance with instruction manual guidelines.

Please contact **Robert Johnson**, safety analyst, Risk Management Division, Department of Finance, at 703-324-3043, TTY 711, if you have any questions regarding holiday related safety issues. ■

Deputy County Executive Verdia Haywood receives human services award

Fairfax County Deputy County Executive **Verdia Haywood** has been named the Individual Who Has Done the Most to Promote Human Services in Northern Virginia by the Human

Services Coalition of Northern Virginia. Haywood was honored at a luncheon on Oct. 18.


The Human Services Coalition of Northern Virginia brings together the chief executive officers of numerous nonprofit organizations that provide human services to the residents of the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park, and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William.

"I am both honored and humbled by this award," said Haywood. "It takes all of us coming together – local governments, community-based nonprofits, the private sector, the community itself – to address and

resolve challenges faced by our neighbors living in our communities. The coalition helps provide critical coordination, collaboration, leadership and inspiration to all of us." ■



Verdia Haywood receives the award from event chairperson, Judith Dittman.



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The full stories with pictures

Hurricane responders recall experiences

Fairfax County responded quickly to the impact of Hurricane Katrina. Several teams of county employees helped with the recovery efforts on the Gulf Coast. Here are the **full stories** from some county employees who went to the area. The photographs in this story are provided by **Jeff Smithberger (JS)** and **Raul Castillo (RC)**.

Rob Stalzer, deputy county executive

The eighteen members of NoVa Emergency Response Team 5 (NoVa ERT 5) learned a lot about emergency management and disaster preparedness, the people and the city of New Orleans, the Gulf region, and each other. We left New Orleans



Stalzer and friend (JS)

with a lot of inspiration, new friends, valuable contacts from many local, state and federal agencies, unique experiences, a few pictures and a lot of memories.

This was one of the most professionally gratifying things I've been a part of – especially seeing 18 individuals quickly come together as a cohesive team focused on the same objectives and having genuine team chemistry. It happens, but not always and not always like this. I just feel good having been a part of it.

Most importantly, we contributed – along with the other NoVA teams – to the disaster response and the recovery efforts and outcomes. In most instances we achieved success as a result of respectful persistence and by quickly building relationships and trust with key local and federal officials. New Orleans has a long way to go – the challenges are huge and the damage is extensive. Seeing the devastation up close from the ground is almost indescribable. Pictures can't capture the extensiveness of the destruction. At this

point, I don't think anyone can say for sure that the city will ever truly recover from Hurricane Katrina.

Our last official act was to facilitate continuity of operations by presenting the city's director of Homeland Security, who is also the Incident Commander and an appointee of the mayor, a comprehensive resource notebook which included recommendations and observations from our 15 days in the city. From what we heard repeatedly from many senior City officials, the city wants to continue to improve its emergency operations and response efforts. The recommendations in the notebook will help to continue what the NoVA teams started by reinforcing the actions we took, the methods we used and the behaviors we modeled. But ultimately it'll be up to the city leaders to make it happen. Time will tell - but things need to happen quickly.

You'll probably hear a lot of stories, etc., from the six Fairfax people on the first team and the eight of us from NoVa ERT 5. It was a unique experience that we look forward to sharing.

Lt. Raúl G. Castillo, Fire & Rescue

What impressed me about the employees from the city of New Orleans was that despite their losses



Ray Pylant, building official, checks out a support. (JS)

Flooded houses (RC)



See Full Stories, page 10

Full stories, from page 9

of homes, families, and friends, many continued to carry on and perform their



Definitely a dry dock. (RC)

duties in a professional manner. They provided the residents with essential services such as shelter, water, electricity, food, and the restoration of their pride. These are the people that really deserve the credit.

They will have to continue to deal with their losses for quite some time.

As public servants, we are entrusted to protect the lives and property of the people we serve. Although Hurricanes Katrina, Ophelia, Rita and Wilma have caused vast devastation and damage, they have brought the best out in many people...the unsung heroes. I am always thankful for the opportunity to represent Fairfax County.

Suzanne Devlin, deputy police chief

It is a rare opportunity to a part of a high level team to assist in working through a National event of such devastating proportion.

As we flew into the city of New Orleans, the city and its environs devastation became real. The normally bustling airport was almost empty except for the heavy presence of armed military and police. We were swept

Water, water, every where... (JS)



away in bus limousines to the Joint Operations Center in New Orleans where we had our first on the ground sensory experience. The sites of

blown out hotels, big box stores collapsed, empty highways and flooded neighborhoods could only remind one of being in a war torn country – it was so surreal – you first felt like you were part of a movie set. The flies that I knew that could only be associated with rotted meat were abundant. The devastation was made real through the thick and noxious odors and flying debris which littered the streets reminding me of the paper-filled pictures of the World Trade Center tragedy.

After brief introductions to the layout of the city and the daunting tasks that lay before the team, we were escorted through the sleeping “city of the dead” towards our sleeping quarters which for me was the Navy vessel, Iwo Jima.

The morning’s orders had me traveling to Baton Rouge to be part of a liaison team. I



Michael Wood, deputy fire chief, and Suzanne Devlin, deputy police chief. (JS)

was assigned to work with the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security, specifically assigned to the State Police. Once there I lived on the barracks facility and was attended

to by assigned inmates – who did the laundry, clean up and food preparation for the Louisiana State Police and me! The LSP had moved all the troopers’ families that they could to the barracks to keep their people working. This included dogs, cats and canaries! However, LSP had their “boots on the ground” – and this is a model to learn from.

My daily activities included communications or attendance in daily high level meetings with the Louisiana State Police as well as the State EOC/ Incident Commander Colonel Cliff Oliver and FCO Colonel Bill Lokey. Each day opened with briefings from parish presidents in the state who reported

See Full stories, page 11

Full stories, from page 10

on their needs to FEMA. Once this occurred, those handling FEMA requests went to work coordinating orders and logistics to the parishes. (This effort was what has been drawing such significant criticism from Congress.)

However, during the time I was there, I only saw incredible efforts by hundreds of volunteers and employees from around the country working to fill an incomprehensible need for food, water and shelter all in the wake of yet



Flooded houses. (RC)

the next threat – Rita. So, in the midst of recovery efforts for Katrina, the people assigned had to also work on preparedness for Rita.

My two weeks demonstrated how challenging communication can be when you work across organizational cultures even those that are similar like the military and the state police. Our team had to get “in” and get “synthesized” so having the ability to “talk the talk,” and know when to just sit and listen became very crucial to getting things accomplished.

For me, I suppose my high time came in assisting an ship-owner of a Pacific Northwest company who had traveled to New Orleans looking for anyone who would assist him in delivering free “housing kits” to New Orleans. He needed a port of call. I was able to connect him to the parish presidents who could then work to get their port open to receive the goods.

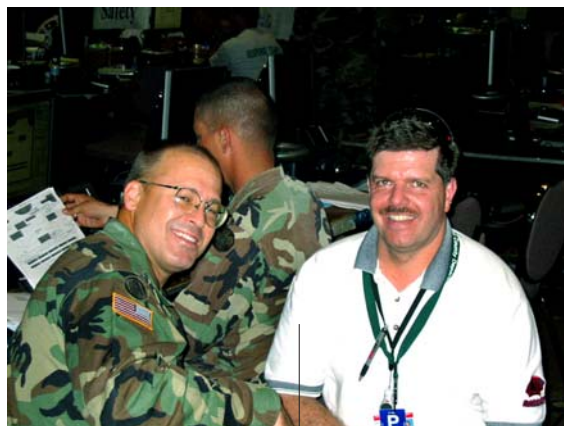
My other accomplishment was in ordering “new” uniforms, raingear and vehicles for

the New Orleans Police Department. The ordering wasn’t overly complex but the delivery became an incredible challenge! Finding and lining up trucks that were available to get 250 vehicles to New Orleans which was under water became just another obstacle to getting police back to work.

I am very grateful to Fairfax County for having been given this opportunity.

**Jeff Smithberger,
Division of Solid Waste, DPWES**

Working in the New Orleans Emergency Operations Center and throughout the parish was a moving experience. It was unlike any other experience I have ever encountered at local disasters I have faced before. The breadth and scope was simply beyond words. I met and worked with dedicated people from all over the US, including those from New Orleans. One in particular was a 50 year old gentleman, Lionel, who had lost everything he his wife and four children had. He was rescued by a Coast Guard helicopter from their roof, several days before I met him. Lionel worked for a local shipping company as forklift operator at the local port. I met him and his wife, as they were staying on the same ship as we were (The State of Maine) and working at the adjacent warehouse we used for FEMA supplies. Their positive attitude



Army Lt. Col. Robert Reister, Ft. Hood, Tx, and Jeff Smithberger. (JS)



Boat parking? (JS)

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**Katrina relief efforts
are online at
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/
emergency/katrina/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/katrina/)**

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moved me. While I knew our team was only there for a two-week period, they would face this tragedy each day for much longer. We had an informal trade-a-shirt program with those we met, and Lionel and his sons now have most of the Fairfax County shirts I took down! It was also a pleasure to work with the regional teams we established to travel down to assist with the situation. While meeting the members from Arlington, Alexandria, Prince William and Loudoun for the first time, we instantly bonded to become a functional team very quickly. I find myself still checking the daily updates posted by the ship we stayed on and follow the progress that is occurring in the region. While the work was intense and long each day, I'm ready to go back if ever needed!

**NoVa
Emergency
Response
Team 5. (RC)**

John Fout, Internal Audit

As I prepared to go to New Orleans, I

thought I had seen enough on television to know what I was walking into. I was wrong. The devastation was far more than I could have envisioned and it became very personal as we worked with many returning city staff that had lost everything. We had a great team of professional people that I am proud to have been a part of. I know the team's contributions made a



Temporary emergency operations center in a New Orleans hotel. (RC)

difference as we assisted the city toward getting back on its feet. This experience impressed upon me the necessity of emergency plans, not just for public safety, but also for the general business operations of local government. Normal tasks such as procurement were difficult at best as the city's business processes and systems were down.

Roy Shrout, Office of Emergency Management

I had an opportunity to both fly over the city and look at it from the ground with some U.S. Army reservists from Kentucky. The magnitude of destruction is total in some sections of the city and can only be appreciated "up close and personal." Homes which once were fixed to concrete foundations now rested in the middle of the street. Cars, boats, every imaginable personal effect and entire trees littered the area with some homes resting on cars. I also found that what was seen on the television or heard on the news pales in comparison to the stories we heard. The personal stories and heroic

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efforts of the employees of the city to help others were profound and had a great impact on us. A police captain told a few of us one evening that during the night the hurricane came through, one of their off duty officers yelled over the police radio channel that he was trapped in his attic with water was up to his waist and still rising. He was able to breath through one of the bathroom vent pipes that led to the roof. Everyone listening knew that his life was about to end when one of the police supervisors came over the radio asking if the officer had his weapon. His reply was, "yes." The supervisor calmly



New Orleans Superdome. (RC)

talked him into drawing the weapon and to shoot holes into the roof so that he could "punch and kick" his way out. Several minutes of radio silence went by when the officer came over the radio with the news that he had made it through the roof just as the water began to pour out of the hole he had made. This story left us all deeply moved. We also made new friends and met colleagues from all over the country. I worked with a group of 18 distinguished individuals from Northern Virginia who brought to the Emergency Operations Center professionalism, dedication and a commitment to help the citizens of the City of New Orleans. The experience will never be forgotten and lessons learned will be with each of us for a lifetime.

Dana Paige, Family Services

As I worked alongside health and human services officials from New Orleans and those from Northern Virginia, there was a strong sense of commitment to making the city safe and supportive for residents as they returned to rebuild their community.

I recognized the scope of the work required, the limits of what we could do in a short period of time, and yet how important it

was that our Northern Virginia team was there, working alongside and in support of the New Orleans local government officials, many of whom had lost their own homes and were dealing with personal loss, and yet were there, also working 12 hour days, doing all they could for their city. I sensed that our presence was support in itself – the local officials there knew that they were not in this alone.

(Editor's Note: Thanks to the above county employees who shared these and other stories about people helping people. And thanks to all county employees who have responded to make life easier for those affected by one of the nation's greatest disasters.) ■



Dana Paige keeps in touch. (JS)

Mississippi morning. (RC)

